

Nadine Dorries MP
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

10 December 2020

Dear Nadine Dorries MP,

I am writing to request an urgent meeting to discuss my concerns about your response to the bereaved families who are calling for a statutory public inquiry into failings in Essex mental health services.

As you are aware, over 105,000 people supported a petition calling for a public inquiry into the death of Matthew Leahy, who died at the Linden Centre in 2012. INQUEST is aware of six patients found hanging at the Linden Centre alone between 2004 and 2019, and a further death this year. Since Melanie Leahy's petition and her relentless campaigning, a much wider group of families have come forward to raise their concerns about the failures in care and treatment by Essex mental health services.

Your initial response to the petition was to state that a statutory public inquiry was an inappropriate way of looking into one or two cases, yet the evidence clearly points to this being a pattern of repeated systemic failures, leading to a significant number of preventable deaths.

It is our view, along with that of the families, that only a statutory public inquiry with the active participation of bereaved families can ensure the broad ranging public scrutiny needed to improve the standard of care and prevent future deaths in Essex mental health services. Nothing less will take us further than the investigations and inquests, none of which have prevented further deaths or enabled accountability and change. This is about ensuring an Inquiry in public with the necessary powers to get to the truth and help safeguard lives in the future.

As you are aware, over 2,000 families have written to the Prime Minister rejecting the proposed inquiry. It would set a shameful precedent for you to proceed with establishing an inquiry that does not have the trust and confidence of the families who have already been so devastatingly failed by the services that should have kept their loved ones safe and looked after.

I would also like the opportunity to discuss further with you the issues arising from our correspondence earlier this year, in particular the unacceptable delays in implementing the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Bill, known as "Seni's Law".

With the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the families affected by the deaths that have occurred throughout Essex in mind, I look forward to arranging a meeting to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely,



Deborah Coles, Director of INQUEST
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